

**Knik River to Wasilla Track Improvements
Girdwood Commuter Rail Project
Girdwood, Alaska
(November 2002)**

Description

As a part of the Girdwood Commuter Rail Project, the Alaska Railroad Corporation (ARRC) is proposing track improvements between Girdwood and Wasilla. This project will realign sharp curves and rehabilitate two bridges between the Knik River and Wasilla. The track realignment will increase speeds, facilitate operations, and improve safety for ARRC customers and staff. ARRC operates both freight and passenger service over the section of trackage scheduled for improvement.

The capital cost of the project is estimated to be \$11.3 million in current (2000) dollars. The FTA Section 5309 funding share is expected to be \$9 million. Because the proposed New Starts share is less than \$25 million, the project is exempt from the New Starts criteria, and is thus not subject to FTA's evaluation and rating (49 USC 5309(e)(8)(A)).

Summary Description	
Proposed Project:	Knik River to Wasilla Improvements
Total Capital Cost (\$2000):	\$11.3 Million
Section 5309 New Starts Share (\$2000):	\$9.0 Million (80%)
Annual Operating Cost:	N/A
Ridership Forecast:	N/A

Status

In 1999 the ARRC undertook a study of its system titled the "Woodside Study," which assessed the overall condition of the railroad and the ability to undertake various types of improvements, including commuter rail. During 2000, the study identified the benefits of incrementally improving the performance of the railroad on its existing right-of-way.

In June 2000, FTA approved entry into Preliminary Engineering for the Alaska Railroad Curve Straightening and Double Tracking Project and approved entrance into Final Design in July 2001. A documented Categorical Exclusion was issued in June 2001 for the Knik River to Wasilla Track segment. The project was included in the Anchorage Metropolitan Transportation Study's (AMATS/Anchorage MPO) long range transportation plan 2001 update in April 2001. FTA issued a letter of no prejudice (LONP) for construction in December 2001. Through FY 2002, Congress has appropriated \$27.25 million in Section 5309 New Starts funding for the commuter rail system. The project is not authorized in TEA-21.

Alaska Railroad- Knik River to Wasilla Track Improvements

Girdwood, Alaska

